

The Return of the Middle Class

BY JOHN CORBIN

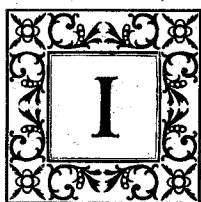
I—DEMOCRACY AND WOMANHOOD

During the past generation social and economic problems have been discussed almost exclusively as problems of two factors—the rich and the poor, labor and capital. The only solutions proposed have centred in capitalist individualism or in proletarian communism. Yet throughout history there has been a third factor, once recognized as primary—the middle class of brain-workers—the technical, managerial, professional class.

It is the author's contention that Communist and Capitalist alike are failing in the task of world reconstruction, and for essentially the same reason—that they have failed to evoke the full power of the class of the well-born and well-educated. Whether consciously or unconsciously, they have stifled it rather, prevented it from attaining its normal scope, and performing its indispensable service of leadership. The problem of the present and the future is to restore the middle class to its historic function.

The middle-class woman especially has suffered—the modern lady. The present articles, which embody the main conclusions on this point, outline a new programme of feminism, foreshadowing a continuance and culmination of the movement that lately achieved the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Only by the return of the middle-class woman to her normal dignity and leadership can modern life be made capable of the great task that confronts it.

DEMOCRACY AND WOMANHOOD



It is a long-familiar fact that the Industrial Revolution, while it has vastly enriched civilization as a whole, has oppressed and imbruted the industrial worker—a fact familiar so long that it is well on the way to be righted. Somewhat less familiar is the fact that the Industrial Revolution has wrought a hardship upon the middle-class woman which is as great, depriving her of the very labor it has heaped upon the industrial workers; yet more and more we are realizing that the weakened morale and declining birth-rate of the middle class result largely from the industrial unproductiveness of the modern household. Thus far, it is true, no one has taken this result of the Democratic and the Industrial Revolutions very seriously, for the middle-class woman lives amid a diffusion of wealth and enjoyment such as man-

kind has never known. But what if the triumph were material merely—what if the native instincts of the class of brain-workers were oppressed, its spiritual life starved and stricken? It could only bode ill for the fabric of civilization.

In point of fact, is not the world filled with foreboding? As we read of the German menace in the days before the war, so now we read a lengthening list of books prophetic of evil—"The Passing of the Great Race," "The Rising Tide of Color," "Is America Safe for Democracy?" Viscount Bryce in his elaborate survey of modern democracies raises many grave questions that remain unanswered. The German is defeated and, at least for one generation, subdued, but only to give way to a subtle, deeper menace. As of old, we mainly manage to shake off the spell of fear—yet with a difference. More and more, in the magazine article, in the daily press, in our own familiar conversation, we encounter the fateful phrase and tolerate it: "If civilization is to endure . . ."

Something of our fatalism arises from

the conception that, by an inexplicable law of nature, civilization is bound to recur in cycles, periods of high achievement alternating with periods of decadence. The idea seems warranted by the past of the race and historians tacitly countenance it. What has been will be! Yet evidence is accumulating that such fatalism may be unduly facile. Together with vastly increased wealth, the era of the Industrial Revolution has brought us vastly increased knowledge of nature and of society, vastly enhanced control over all vital forces. What if, in point of biologic fact, the recurrent decadence of the race is not an inevitable phenomenon? What if, in point of historic truth, a leading and perhaps dominant factor in each successive cataclysm has been just such a maladjustment of the social and economic forces of the nation to its vital needs as now confronts us—a maladjustment which knowledge and wisdom would have rectified?

In its biologic aspect the problem of the catastrophic cycle is simple enough. Man is, saving his presence, an animal; and nowhere else in the animal kingdom do we find life subject to cycles. Countless species have dwindled to extinction. Many have remained stationary since the dawn of history, such as the honey-bee whose perfect state was described in its essentials by the ancients. A few species have marvellously advanced—yet not through cycles of defeat. The story of these steadily advancing species is an object-lesson for cyclic man, plain to the casual glance.

A fascinating chapter might be written of the unending progress of the eohippus. When he appears in the geologic record, he is about the size of a fox-terrier. Precisely when he or his kindred was first taken in hand by man the sapient we do not know; but he grew amazingly in stature, in fleetness, and in strength. The horse of the Mongolian Steppes, the nearer ancestor of our horse, measures to-day, as one may see in the Zoological Park of New York, some twelve hands high—precisely four feet. What an advance over little eohippus! Wherever man became more sapient his horses waxed amazingly. In ancient Egypt the Arabian steeds of the shepherd kings, and

later King Solomon's "forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots," must have already reached the stature of the modern Mongolian. The horses of the Parthenon frieze were probably reduced in scale in the interests of the artistic composition; in all likelihood the Greek horse too was as large as the Steppe horse of to-day. The horse on the sarcophagus of Alexander the Great, probably Bucephalus, is almost as large as a polo-pony. As to the hackney city horses that drew toy chariots through the miniature streets of Pompeii, making the narrow ruts which amaze us to-day, we may be confident that they were larger than the Parthenon horses, perhaps as large as Bucephalus. Also through the Middle Ages, if we may judge by the steeds of William the Conqueror as we see them in the Bayeux Tapestry, the horse seems steadily growing. A statute of Henry VII of England looking to the improvement of the breed mentions a brood mare as thirteen hands high. To-day a polo-pony of more than fourteen hands is no longer a polo-pony but what we call a horse. If little eohippus could know how his race was destined to stand as many feet, almost, as he stood inches! Since Henry VII man has been very sapient—with regard to horses—and we have the massive Clydesdale on one hand and the thoroughbred racer on the other, each improving so amazingly in his separate line that almost every year brings a new triumph. And so we have come from the fox-trot of eohippus to the silken stride of Man o' War. In biology, surely, there is no reason why any stock, well cared for, should decline.

Has homo sapiens not been properly cared for? It would seem so. In the cave of Cro-Magnon were found remains of men of the early Stone Age—six-footers with domed foreheads who, in both stature and brain capacity, were the equals, and perhaps in advance of the average man of to-day. In his "Men of the Old Stone Age," Professor Osborn calls them, because of the glory of their physique and the originality of their art impulse, "Paleolithic Greeks." "Artistic observation and representation, and a true sense of proportion and of beauty, were instinctive with them from the beginning." Their development, doubtless, was in a cycle,

like that of all their successors in civilization. Out of their interest in animals, which were their possessions and their prey, they set down for us many spirited drawings of the horse, the elk, the mastodon—but of themselves no line of true portraiture. So man has always been—self-ignorant, self-neglectful. In due course, something smote the Cro-Magnards—twenty-five thousand years ago or thereabout, ten times farther back in the abyss of time than the Age of Pericles. The horses they loved and pictured survived them—and were carried still forward by their conquerors. Strange portent!

As early as Plato, man's care for what he has and neglect of what he is was clearly noted as fatal to welfare and virtue—and has ever since been mainly disregarded. So time and again homo sapiens has arisen to pinnacles of wealth and power, of intellect, art, and morals, only to be dashed down, crushed out, extinguished. In the Stone Age the Cro-Magnards are a solitary phenomenon. In the dawn of history the Greeks stand similarly alone in their vastly greater splendor. Never since has their stature of mind and of spirit been equalled—never even approached, except perhaps in the nineteenth century. It is the melancholy conclusion of anthropologists that twenty-five thousand years the human race has not advanced, either in stature or in brain power.

We of to-day, however, stand in a new place of power. Where Plato could conceive of human biology only in the crudely physical and empyrical terms of the breeder of game birds and sporting dogs, Darwin, Mendel, and de Vries have given us keys to the mystery of our heredity—mental and spiritual as well as physical. Where Plato stood isolated in a brief historic movement, with no conception of the possibilities of progress and with scarcely a suspicion of the cyclic cataclysms of history, we have grasped both ideas. Biologically we are, or should be, masters of the future.

Economically and politically, according to our traditional tenets, the world is fortunate as never before. Except for its present setback, it is richer than ever, and it is much more democratic. For the first time in history the future depends upon the collective wisdom of the people.

Nor has our doctrine of equality blinded us to the need of education. Quite freely we admit that if the nation is to endure and advance its citizens must go to school—be educated out of equality to the top of their various bents. So we have compulsory attendance in the grammar schools and a system of free high schools and state universities which, for the money spent on it and the numbers that make use of it, is unapproached in the modern world—ininitely beyond anything the world has hitherto known. Like the polls, our classrooms are thronged. But are we rich in virtue as in things material? Are universal suffrage and compulsory schooling, even when sustained by education highly privileged, advancing the life of the spirit?

Among others, the late Viscount Bryce wrestled with this problem—confining himself, as was the way of the nineteenth century, to the political as opposed to the sociologic and biologic point of view. In writing "Modern Democracy," he mainly suspended judgment; but when, at the Institute of Politics at Williams College in the summer of 1921, he contemplated democracy as the controlling force in international relations, the balance visibly trembled. Speaking of Mazzini's high hopes of the new equality, he remarked that "the behavior of free peoples, under republican as well as under monarchical forms, has not verified" them. Nor has democracy developed leadership. As the mass of citizens increases, he said in effect, the ratio of leaders decreases. Nor yet is it true, as many have assumed, that the cause and the era are everything, the leader nothing—that if there had been no Napoleon, no Bismarck, no Cavour, others would necessarily have risen to do their work. "Broadly speaking, [the people] are what their leaders make them." And the world of to-day is leaderless. He was thinking, of course, of a league or association of nations. "Can human nature in the members of many civilized nations be raised to and sustained at a higher moral level than it has yet attained?" The question had a sadly negative inflection. "European peoples have been groping in the dark for the last few years." As our guest, Viscount Bryce refrained from commenting upon our own chaotic counsels; but it was

clearly his view that on both sides of the Atlantic the vision of democracy is blurred, the will of free nations perplexed and halting.

It has not always been so; the phenomenon is, in fact, new and rather startling. Under the first French republic, four young generals appeared, of very great and apparently equal promise. All except one were killed, but that one was Bonaparte. Wherever the liberating spirit of the era touched the nations—in Italy, France, and Germany, as in the England and America of the eighteenth century—great leaders arose who blazed out paths of progress. Some of them, as Napoleon and Bismarck, recklessly abused their power; but they all marked signal advances for their nation, from which there was no returning. Of late we have had a world convulsion, the mightiest in history; but in all the embattled democracies has any great leader arisen, in warfare, in statesmanship, even in the realm of political thinking? We know in our hearts that Lord Bryce was right.

In the past such a victory as we of late achieved has generally been followed by a period of jubilant confidence, of striding progress. Why are we downcast? Possibly it has occurred to us that if we had had leaders, even if we the people had been capable of understanding the comparatively wise men among us, we should have foreseen the German menace—and, by facing it manfully, averted it. What we have accomplished by war, at infinite cost and sacrifice, was well within the statesmanship of an association of intelligent nations intelligently led. We know in our hearts that, when the conflict was upon us, the nations blundered egregiously, squandering their resources and wasting their strength in jealous dissensions and divided leadership. At best we barely escaped with our skins. Except for one fact, free France would have fallen in 1915—and free England as soon thereafter as the Germans could launch from French ports the terror of their submarines. The saving fact was that the Germans, with all their skill and foresight in material things, were no less stupid in their greed and arrogance than we in soft complacency. Rightly speaking, was there any victory—or was it only a

defeat of the nation that was blinder and more incompetently led? Now that we again have peace of a sort, we need above all things stability and constructive statesmanship. For the first time the thing is possible which our wise men have dreamed through the centuries—a firmer union of the nations, dedicated to the enlightened self-interest of brotherhood and peace. But our leaders faltered. The glorious future was lost in an abyss of national distrusting, personal ambitions and party politics. Of all the men brought forward by the war, Lord Bryce could name only three as possessed of light and leading, and those from the outskirts of our boasted civilization—Masaryk, Venizelos, and Jan Smuts.

A certain antagonism between democracy and enlightened leadership has of late become pretty generally recognized. An increase in the mass of citizens means a lowering of the common denominator of intelligence, so that a statesman must be not only great and wise in himself but must have the additional faculty, almost equally rare, of imposing his leadership upon men who are not quite capable of understanding him. Lincoln himself owed more than we often admit to the fact that, being of the common people, the common people followed him—not so much by their reason and insight as by the sheer instinct of like for like. A public career is ceaselessly menaced by the fate of Aristides the Just. When Theodore Roosevelt betook himself to the South American jungle, to leave there his youth and his strength, it was consciously and avowedly to escape a revulsion of crowd psychology. "I must get out and away," he said to a friend. "The people are growing tired of me." A similar fear obsessed Lloyd George when he launched his Khaki Campaign and Orlando when he demanded Fiume—nor was Clemenceau wholly the world statesman when he wrested impossible terms from Germany.

Thus far we have viewed democracy from the political point of view of those who originally championed it—among whom was Lord Bryce himself, as he rather ruefully acknowledges. The failure pervades also the fields of art, science, letters. We of the English speech patronize the nineteenth century, smile derisive-

ly at the mid-Victorian; but has the generation now passing produced anything comparable? It should have done so, for it is the ripest fruit of the democracy which we laud and cherish. We have, of course, only rough standards of measurement. Among American universities Harvard once graduated distinguished men in notable numbers. But not of late. Thanks to the democratization of education during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the president of the university signed the sheepskins of as many young men as all his predecessors back to 1636; yet as against the multitudinous worthies of the past—from the Adams family in politics; Bancroft, Prescott, and Motley in history; Agassiz, Grey, and Shaler in science; Emerson, Holmes, and Lowell in letters, down to William James—President Eliot's graduates included only one leader of the higher order, and he was no New Englander—Roosevelt. This fact was pointed out by a Harvard graduate. In the same period many other universities doubled and redoubled their numbers. Can graduates of any of them tell a different story? Have democratized Oxford and Cambridge any one to compare with the great English poets and scientists and statesmen of the nineteenth century?

It may be said, of course, that leadership is not indispensable—that a nation can survive without great statesmen, great scientists, philosophers, men of letters, if only the mass of citizens is sound in character and intelligence. Is it not in the nature of democracy to advance, not through single spies, but by battalions? So set is our belief in the diffusive power of education that until quite recently few have ever asked this question. To-day it rises everywhere. Is the nation as a whole, the great mass of democracy, capable of carrying forward, even of sustaining, the civilization erected by the nineteenth century? If it is not, then indeed we are on the steep downward way the Romans once trod, the Greeks, the Persians, the Egyptians—the descent that cyclic man has taken a thousand times, back to the "Paleolithic Greeks" of Cro-Magnon.

Thanks to the war, we have here a considerable body of data—thanks to the war and Professor R. M. Yerkes who brilliantly seized a great opportunity. When

our army was drafted the men were submitted to a mental census. The tests were of necessity applied very rapidly and in a rather haphazard manner; but the officers who subsequently had the task of sorting and organizing the men reported, in overwhelming numbers, that they afforded a very valuable index of the ability of their soldiers. According to Major Yerkes, the youth of the United States falls into classes thus, the figures representing percentages:

A	B	C +	C	C -	D	D - and E
4½	9	16½	25	20	15	10

A men are "of high officer type when they are also endowed with leadership," they have "the ability to make a superior record in college." They are only 4½ per cent of the whole. Class B includes "many men of the commoner officer type"—men "capable of an average record in college." They are 9 per cent of the whole. C + men are mainly of the non-commissioned officer type, with an occasional man whose power of leadership fits him for a commission. They are inferior college material, and more numerous than A men and B men combined—16½ per cent. C men are the largest single group, 25 per cent. They are an "excellent private type, with a certain amount of fair non-commissioned officer material"; but they are "rarely capable of finishing a high-school course." C - men (20 per cent) are, as privates, usually "satisfactory for work of a routine order only," and of "low" intelligence—average grammar-school material. D men (15 per cent) are of the lower order of privates and of grammar-school pupils. D - men are sometimes "fit for regular service," but in school they "rarely go beyond the third or fourth grade." Together with the E men, they "contain many of the moron grade of feeble-mindedness." Thus, only 13½ per cent of our young men are good college material, and only 16½ per cent good high-school material—30 per cent in all. Seventy per cent of the citizens of our democracy are incapable of a high-school education; of these only a little more than a third—25

per cent of the whole—are good grammar-school material. In another table, Major Yerkes records that 47.3 per cent of the draft men were technically morons, being of a “mental age” of twelve or less. Recent critics have declared it “inconceivable that almost half of our fellow citizens are morons,” but they admit that post-war tests made in factories and department-stores confirm Major Yerkes’s results.

The number of the obviously and hopelessly unfit is equally startling as a comment on democratic institutions. During the war the chief of the section of neurology and psychiatry, Doctor Pearce Bailey, estimated, on the basis of his records of the draft men, that there are well over 350,000 male defectives in the United States—of males and females, almost three-quarters of a million. Of these, according to an official estimate, only about one-tenth are in institutions; the rest wander loose in the community, many of them voting as cheerfully as the army of their superiors, the morons. By the army tests of literacy (a very different thing from the census test, which leaves each citizen free to depose as to his culture and attainments), one-quarter of all Americans (24.9 per cent) are illiterates—that is, are unable “to read and understand newspapers and write letters home.” These also, or a vast majority of them, are cheerful voters.

Thus for the first time we have a scientific record, however rough, of the collective intelligence of the people upon whom the future of our democracy depends. Under the institutions by which we live, the vote of a majority is the most sacred of all things, as it is the most decisive. The army tests explain as nothing else could the character of the great mass of our legislation—and legislators. Clearly something more is requisite to a nation than even the most democratic institutions, the most advanced universities.

In the present deficiency of great leaders, a peculiar interest attaches to the 4½ per cent of first-rate officer and university material, an interest scarcely less great to the 9 per cent of second-rate material of the same kind. Only 13½ per cent of Americans are really worth a college education! Is this upper crust of our democracy gaining or losing in numbers?

We shall not know precisely until we have another mental census; but such statistics as we have are not at all cheerful. Over a decade ago it appeared from class reports that Vassar graduates had on the average only one child. Harvard graduates, who include an unusual number of men inheriting wealth, averaged one child and four-tenths. Statistics reported in August, 1921, from Harvard, Yale, Smith, and Barnard give approximately the same result. As Doctor C. B. Davenport has shown, if the Harvard of the future were limited to the sons of Harvard men it would shrink in half a dozen generations from 5,000 to 250; that vast and ancient institution would have to close its doors. It is an interesting paradox, this, that the one great safeguard which democracy has invoked, education, progressively devours its children like Chronos of old, diminishing them by almost one-half with each generation.

The sober truth is, of course, that the fault does not lie with the university. If it did, the case would not be so difficult. The fault lies with our economic and social system. Those who are educable and educated are so handicapped by the time required for a college course, by the meagre returns of a life of brain labor and the penalizing of family life by taxation, that youth is gone before they can marry and middle age has come before even the successful among them can support a normal family. Not the university but the nation itself is devouring the line of those capable of sustaining its higher activities and bringing them forward.

This, then, is the cause of the middle-class woman against the State—that it has, albeit unintentionally, deprived her of the normal life of her kind. Whose cause is it that the nation has sterilized those very homes that should be the shrines of all its fairest traditions, an abounding and eternal source of citizens well-born and well-bred?

“Democracy,” say the socialists, “is the inexhaustible well from which the nation draws its resources, human, economic, social, spiritual. All these are comprehended in democracy and only in democracy!” But the doctrine is not primarily socialistic. Are we not ourselves as a nation dedicated to the proposition, self-evident to Thomas Jefferson,

that all men are created equal? Clearly, this proposition stands in need of repair.

Sensible people, of course, have glossed the doctrine of equality as applying not to individuals but to classes—or, rather, as militating against arbitrary class distinction; it is only “before the law” that men are equal. Native ability, we have assumed, is distributed impartially through the various orders—being proportionately frequent, of course, in those that are more numerous. Thus if the educated class fails to reproduce itself, its place will be taken by others who rise from the prolific masses. Something of the established traditions of conduct and right living may be lost, but there will be a compensating gain in an upward flow of strong, new democratic blood. Those who reason thus are not abashed by the fact that the native American stock of the older immigration is steadily declining in numbers and ability; they look for the future of our country to immigrants, now mainly from the south and east of Europe, who swarm upon us when we let them at the rate of a million a year.

The Boston Committee on Immigration issues “A Little Book for Immigrants.” The foreign-born and their children in the city, it says, number two-thirds of the entire population. Of these only about one-half come from English-speaking countries—mainly from Ireland. The rest come chiefly from the south of Italy and the Jewish peoples of central and eastern Europe. The little book is full of helpful knowledge. Friendly counsel abounds, especially about education. “Go to the Art Museum, go often. See every part of it!” The foreign-born and their children, it says, are already in a vast majority; “a few years from now” the city will be “what they make it.” Why should any one care? Not only Boston but democratic America as a whole believes in education—and are not our universities crowded as never before?

This belief in education as the saving grace of democracy is not without warrant of experience. Through most of the nineteenth century in all progressive countries, liberal institutions worked amazingly well. But it is now beginning to appear that there was more than education in the fact, more than democracy. Throughout long ages the great mass of

men had been held fast in the strait-jacket of class distinction, the able as well as the incompetent. Of a sudden, freedom came. In Napoleon’s exultant phrase, the way was open to talent. The result was an effervescence of strong new life such as the world has seldom seen. But all too soon the wine ceased to spume and sparkle, became flat. Was it a mistake to assume that the bubbling could continue indefinitely? Was the supply of the abler sort of men strictly limited—the masses remaining, as always, inert? Lord Bryce—who quite ignores this vital, as opposed to the merely political and institutional, aspect of the situation—notes a signal decline in the supply of new men of the higher character during the latter part of the old century, dating it precisely in both France and England. The dates mark also the full flowering of democracy.

In the United States we have seen much the same phenomenon, and not merely among university graduates. New England was once our national “brain orchard,” Virginia was the mother of many able men in addition to Presidents. To-day, except perhaps in a few cities, the old stock is manifestly decadent. Even in cities it is shrinking, absolutely as well as relatively. Most of the vigorous blood was drawn off to the Middle West. This in turn had its brief period of efflorescence—Howells, Eugene Field, James Whitcomb Riley and his amiable band of Who’s Hoosiers. In the realm of practical affairs, able men have set up a counter-migration from the West to Eastern cities; but they are relatively few and, with the possible exception of Herbert Hoover, they are not of a very high order. By and large the native blood is becoming static, stagnant. In certain industries—the steel trade and the railways—a few Americans of the old stock still rise from the ranks; but in the farming districts, where the native American preponderates, we hear less and always less of the farm boy who wins fortune and fame in the city, more and more of the stagnant life of those who have remained up country. “New” men are of a very different origin and character.

Throughout the free nations of the North Atlantic, arbitrary class distinctions have ceased to exist, for all time let us hope; but the triumph of democracy

is slight, the evidence for equality negligible, if the population is once more, or is powerfully tending to become, stratified in classes. For in a free world, it would seem, such stratifications are permanent.

Concretely the question is just how men of potential power are distributed socially. Here again the army tests throw a flood of light. A separate tabulation of mental ratings was made by trade or profession, ranging upward from *C* —. The lowest group includes, in ascending order: laborers, general miners, teamsters, and barbers. The *C* group includes twenty-two of the more skilled trades, from horse-shoer and bricklayer up to auto assembler, ship carpenter and telephone operator. The *C* + group includes nine occupations requiring managerial power and education, from concrete construction foremen and stock keepers up to army nurses and bookkeepers. The *B* group is mainly professional—dental officers, mechanical draftsmen, accountants, civil engineers and medical officers. In group *A* a profession stands alone—the army engineers, flower of the graduates of West Point. In a word, the strata of intelligence correspond with amazing precision to the occupational strata. “How can he get wisdom who holdeth the plough?” asked Ecclesiasticus. “He shall not be sought for in public council nor sit high in the congregation.” The nineteenth century thought otherwise, setting down the son of Sirach as an unduly superior person. But in one respect we are advancing; we now know that even with the utmost freedom, the most lavish aid of education, the ploughman is generally—as the scientists say, “statistically”—doomed to follow his plough.

From all present indications we are likely to owe a further revelation to the mental tests—that “statistically,” not only the ploughman but his children are doomed. Records, already numerous, which have been gathered in the schools show that the mentality of the new generation corresponds closely with that of the old. Highly characteristic are the results obtained by Miss A. H. Arlitt of Bryn Mawr, and quoted by Professor McDougall. In the primary grades of a certain school district she tested 342 children. The occupation of the parents

corresponded as follows with the “intelligence quotient” of the children:

Professional men.....	125
Semi-professional and higher business.....	118
Skilled labor.....	107
Semi-skilled and unskilled labor.....	92

The higher grades of intelligence, it is true, are occasionally found in the lower strata, but not often. Doctor Clara Chassel conducted tests of the children of a number of schools, including Horace Mann School in New York, and reported that high intelligence is “approximately five times as frequent” among children of men in the higher occupations as among children of men in the lower.

One hope remains, and only one. The foreigners to whom Boston is turning over her future with seeming cheerfulness come from nations that have been historically oppressed—from Ireland, South Italy, Poland, Russia. The same is true of other great and historic cities, notably Chicago and New York. The immigration, it is true, comes mainly from the class of manual workers; yet it is still possible that opportunity, educational as well as material, will discover in the new masters of our democracy a wealth of ability in citizenship comparable to that which the liberalizing movement of the nineteenth century revealed in the nations of the north and east of Europe. Apparently it is not to be. Miss Arlitt discovered that the average intelligence quotient of the school children she examined corresponded as closely to their nationality as to the occupation of their fathers. The quotient of the 191 Americans she examined was 106; of the 80 Italians, 84; of the 71 colored children, 83. More extensive and precisely similar data was obtained by Major Yerkes from the drafted men. The following table shows the percentage of those in the different nationalities that scored grades *A* and *B*.

England.....	19.7
Scotland.....	13.0
White draft (American).....	12.1
Holland.....	10.7
Canada.....	10.5
Germany.....	8.3
Denmark.....	5.4
Sweden.....	4.3
Norway.....	4.1
Ireland.....	4.1
All foreign countries.....	4.0
Turkey.....	3.4

Austria.....	3.4
Russia.....	2.7
Greece.....	2.1
Italy.....	.8
Belgium.....	.8
Poland.....	.5

It will be seen that, with the exception of Belgium (the representation of which was small and perhaps not characteristic), all northern and eastern countries stand high above the southern and western in number of first-rate intelligence, and that of the Nordic group Ireland is lowest. England, which has a clear lead over all other countries, has on an average almost five times as many *A* and *B* men as Ireland, over seven times as many as Russia and Greece, over twenty times as many as Italy, and almost forty times as many as Poland. In the "well" of our new immigration, manifestly, there is little hope for the future.

Yet among Americans of the older immigration the stratum of the highly educable and educated continues to shrink by almost one-half with each generation. This is something more than race suicide; it is limited, as it seems, to a class. In the lower orders of occupation and intelligence children are born in normal and more than normal numbers—and we continue to tax the middle class sorely to provide for their physical welfare and their education. It is only the well-born and well-bred who are vanishing—the brains and character of the nation. How far the process has already gone we shall never know. It was almost twenty years ago that Theodore Roosevelt vigorously called attention to the idea of "race" suicide. Twenty years before that, the rapid extinction of the elder stock had been clearly noted by sociologists, and noted as a phenomenon dating from the great rush of immigration in the middle of the nineteenth century, which turned back the native American from manual labor, cramped his life and sterilized it. During and since the late war the process has been vastly accelerated by the economic burdens of the middle class. Only one thing is certain. If the 13½ per cent of Americans who are still capable of a college education continue to shrink by half with each generation, our democracy will very soon produce a new kind of equality—the equality of a people who,

except for vanishing remnants of the abler stock and an increasing fringe of morons and imbeciles, will be wholly of the grammar-school type of intelligence. Then, indeed, even though with universal suffrage and the utmost freedom, we shall have a government of the proletariat.

Something of the kind is already upon us. The municipal elections of 1921 gave us, so to speak, the national intelligence quotient in terms of political action. In New York, four years before, about the most vigorous and enlightened administration in the history of the city had been overthrown because, in the paths of official duty, Mayor Mitchel had encountered local antagonism and religious bigotry; above all because he had neglected the arts of general popularity, seeking the counsel of experienced, intelligent and public-spirited citizens. He was overwhelmingly defeated for re-election. The administration of his successor was by far the most obviously wasteful and incompetent in modern memory, deeply injurious to all the real interests of the people. But Mayor Hylan had impressed himself upon the community as "Honest John," champion of the five-cent fare (with which his office had nothing to do), protagonist of a scheme for municipal buses and in general "the friend of the people." He was re-elected by an unprecedented majority of 417,000.

This defeat of all the intelligent and reputable forces of the community was repeated throughout the land wherever there are foreign colonies, or indeed men of the elder stock congested in cities. The mayors of Boston, Buffalo, Youngstown, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Chicago are, from one point of view the motleyest crew that ever enlivened politics; but, as the citizens of those cities know well, they rank with Mayor Hylan as regards their political intelligence quotient.

Time was when the shame of our cities was graft, a plundering of the public by unscrupulous but able men. That evil has been measurably abated. But in its place has arisen a new shame, the disqualification of able public servants by the mere fact of their ability. Of the two, this new shame is infinitely more perilous. Under competent leadership, corruption can be checked; but the future of that nation is dark which scorns high virtue

and intelligence, choosing as its representatives only those who are endeared by human folly and frailty. Our proletariat is still for the most part not positively dishonest, not deeply infected with the more virulent class hatred. But we are obviously far indeed from achieving the intelligent, high-spirited republic of our national aspiration. Only a thin and rapidly narrowing margin separates us from the unchecked rule of the proletariat. When that fails, we shall have these C and C—men in the presidential chair at Washington.

You may know the ideal republic everywhere, even as so briefly developed in Greece and Rome, by one sign and one only. Men of the primal stock rise freely in a few generations from any level of citizenship to any height. In the great mansion of the nation there are broad stairways from floor to floor, upon which the able and energetic freely ascend—and the incompetent descend as surely, though perhaps less freely. In the happy republic, the only republic that can ever endure, blood, like water, seeks its level—and finds it. For the tragic collapse of Greece and Rome many reasons have been alleged—the blunders of democracy and the tyranny of the rich; a wasting of the best stock in senseless warfare and a decline in its birth-rate; inequitable and excessive taxation; frivolity and debauchery. They are all comprised in a single phenomenon, once more in evidence to-day—the destruction of the ably energetic and aspiring middle classes; for they, and they only, are able to govern a nation with justice to all orders, to unite the people against senseless war and to cultivate the arts of peace without its corruptions. And you may know the approaching end of a cycle in human development by this sign: When the alert and vigorous citizen rises in the scale of living, his line ceases. It is as if an ogre grips his children, the flower of the race, and they vanish.

In only one respect does our plight differ from that of countless dead nations; but that may yet prove decisive. The history of thousands of years warns us; we know what we are—and what we may become. Nineteenth-century science has placed us in the seat of control. The in-

stitutions framed by the Fathers still stand, almost in their integrity; the spirit of Washington, Hamilton, Lincoln, Roosevelt, is still potent if we will only take heed. One thing is lacking and only one, leaders of intelligence to guide us, of force to rule us—not the force of conservatism, straining always backward, but the force of enlightened conservation leading us forward on the manifest paths of progress. Somehow, and very soon, we must quit the quagmire of democracy for the mountain trail of the republic.

Who shall lead us upward? Of late a new force has been liberated in the political world. No cause could be greater than this one; and when our women are given a great cause, as they have shown, they are supremely effective. The purity and strength of the nation is peculiarly their responsibility, for through them all life is transmitted, the polluted as well as the pure, the noble in spirit as well as all that is base. Until to-day the middle-class woman has been oppressed, pitifully thwarted and stunted. To-morrow, if we are fortunate, she will be prophet and priestess of the future. It used to be said that the greatest waste of civilization was in the lives of women who are imprisoned in the unindustrial home created by the Industrial Revolution. Already they have made their way to the market-place and forum, and not a few of them with a new vision of what is to be done there.

They alone have the time and the strength. The Industrial Revolution has seen to that—being perhaps not as blind as we have imagined; being in fact so subtle and far-reaching in its purposes that our poor thought has lagged rather painfully behind it. For what other reason was merely material labor forced out of the home—imposed upon machines and upon the duller order of men? Why are women of the middle class given education, training, leisure—if not that they may pursue, with ardor unquenchable, their exclusive and all-important function? What has been called the greatest waste may yet prove the salvation of all that is vitally and spiritually precious. But it must be very soon, if we are to save the white horses of civilization, escaping the fate of Cro-Magnards. . . .

[Mr. Corbin's article, "The Valiant Woman," will appear in the September number.]

The Nature of an Oath

BY KATHARINE FULLERTON GEROULD

ILLUSTRATION BY CHARLES BASKERVILLE



MAN of thirty leaned with crossed arms upon a rustic gate, and stared across the quiet road to a thicket of pin-oaks opposite him. The road, though a public one, was narrow and winding; a true wood road, although it had once been macadamized. Behind the man curled the path by which he had come: a mysterious lane winding about among the beeches that were now a woodland maze of palest gold. Backed by that poetic unreality (for beech woods in autumn are unreal) he stood facing the tarnished bronze of the oaks beyond, and only the road lay between. Philip Lester was not physically unworthy to stand amid these seasonal glories. A high-bred, sunburned, intellectual type he was: a notable combination of fine muscles and exceeding sensitiveness of feature and expression. For all that perfection of flesh and sinew, he stood contemplative, quiet as a tree.

Presently he turned his head at some strange explosive sounds that came to his ear from beyond a turning in the road. He started, half turned back to the path that stretched away behind him; but one strong, slender hand still rested on the gate. Before he had made up his mind, the motor skidded round the turn and stopped dead in front of him with chemical ejaculations of fury or despair. The possessor leaped to the ground, squatted for a moment on the far side of the machine, then bobbed his head up and spied Lester at the gate.

"I say, will you lend me a hand?" he cried.

"The gate is locked," Lester replied slowly.

"You look almost strong enough to jump over." The stranger's smile was winning. "If I had another pair of hands here for a few minutes, I believe I could make town."

Lester took his hand from the gate and slewed round to face the beech wood. "I'll get them to telephone the garage for you," he called back over his shoulder. It was not his fault that he looked like a lord as he turned a magnificent back on trouble.

The man beside the car, however, saw only six feet of obvious competence strolling nonchalantly away from him. "Damned churl!" he ejaculated. But, even if Philip Lester had heard, he would have been unmoved.

As soon as Lester drew out of eyeshot among the trees, he quickened his pace and took the remaining distance at an easy lope. In five minutes he was at the end of the path's fantastic windings, and stood before his father's house. The wide door was open to the late sun. He passed through, hesitated beside the telephone closet, then shrugged his broad shoulders, and delved into the service passage.

"Mary, Charlotte—somebody! Please go to the telephone and call up the garage, whatever it is. There's a man in trouble with his car down by the west gate. Tell them to send some one out at once. Thanks."

He mounted the wide staircase as soon as he was answered, waiting on the landing just long enough to see Charlotte stepping competently to the telephone.

"The west gate, Mr. Philip?"

"Yes, where the beech path hits the road."

He wandered down a corridor to his own room. From his window he could see infinite tree-tops, and, sunk among them at intervals, dim spots of leaf-strewn lawn. A little chill had come into the air, for it was on for October. Lester looked at a calendar on his wall. "Well, daylight saving will soon be over, thank heaven," he muttered. "Why won't they dine later while the infernal thing is on?" At last he turned away from the window, which had lost the sun, and proceeded to the boresome ritual of "dressing."